

IN THE SPECIFICATION

Please replace the paragraphs as indicated below with the amended paragraphs provided, in which insertions are indicated by underline and deletions are indicated by strikethrough or double brackets.

Please replace paragraph [221] with the following amended paragraph:

[221] As shown in FIG. 16, the air cylinder 1024 has a rod 1026 including a larger-diameter portion 1028 on its upper end. The larger-diameter portion 1028 has a slanted surface 1030, which is inclined diametrically inwardly thereof in the downward direction. The air cylinder 1024 has a cylinder tube ~~[[1032]]~~ with a protrusion ~~[[1034]]~~ projecting from an upper end surface thereof.

Please replace paragraph [223] with the following amended paragraph:

[223] The hook 1038 has a through hole therein, which a bolt 1042 is inserted therethrough. The bolt 1042 is threaded into a threaded hole in the protrusion ~~[[1034]]~~. The bolt 1042 has a shank extending through a spring 1044 having an end seated on the hook 1038 and the other end abutting against the lower end face of the head of the bolt 1042.

Please replace paragraph [235] with the following amended paragraph:

[235] The inner movable plate 1108 has a recess ~~[[1124]]~~ defined therein. Second end positioning members 1126 for abutting against and positioning the second end 5 of the connecting rod 1 are mounted on the front vertical end portion 1073 of the upper plate 1054 of the main body 1056.

Please replace paragraph [260] with the following amended paragraph:

[260] Then, the second conveyance carriage 202 is transferred from the horizontal conveyance unit 16a to the horizontal conveyance unit 16b. At this time, the final fourth conveyance carriage 206 which has the chain presser plate 242 reaches the end of the horizontal conveyance unit 16a, and is released from the annular chain 30. Though no force is supplied from the horizontal conveyance unit 16a to the third conveyance carriage **204** ~~[[206]]~~, since the chain presser plates 242 of the first conveyance carriage 200 and the second conveyance carriage 202 are held in contact with the annular chain 30 of the horizontal conveyance unit 16b, the joint conveyance carriage assembly 12 is continuously conveyed.

Please replace paragraph [265] with the following amended paragraph:

[265] When the leading end of the joint conveyance carriage assembly 12, i.e., the first conveyance carriage 200, approaches the gradient conveyance unit 18, the roller 270 of the fourth conveyance carriage 206 abuts against the slanted surface 56a as the lower surface on the end of the cam plate 56. As the joint conveyance carriage assembly 12 is conveyed, the roller 270 is pressed downwardly along the slanted surface 56a, and reaches the parallel surface 56b where the roller 270 remains pressed downwardly by a constant depth (see FIG. **3** ~~[[12]]~~).

Please replace paragraph [266] with the following amended paragraph:

[266] When the roller 270 is subjected to the pressing force from the cam plate 56, the roller 270 compresses the spring 262 of the drive power transmitter 256 (see FIG. **23** ~~[[13]]~~), angularly moving and lowering the swing plate 260 about the front shaft 220.

Please replace paragraph [279] with the following amended paragraph:

[279] As the joint conveyance carriage assembly 12 travels along, the roller 270 is lowered by the slanted surface 180a and the parallel surface 180b of the cam plate 180. At this time, the roller 270 moves in the same manner as it is lowered by the cam plate 56. When the roller 270 is lowered, the lateral-tooth sprocket 266c is brought into mesh with the annular chain 162. If the lateral-tooth sprocket 266c and the annular chain 162 are out of phase with each other at this time, the springs 268 are compressed, the teeth of the lateral-tooth sprocket 266c do not unduly press the chain rollers 162a (see FIG. 11 [[5]]), and hence the lateral-tooth sprocket 266c, the chain rollers 162a, and the cam plate 180 are prevented from being damaged. As the joint conveyance carriage assembly 12 is conveyed, the lateral-tooth sprocket 266c and the annular chain 162 are naturally brought into phase with each other and into mesh with each other.

Please replace paragraph [282] with the following amended paragraph:

[282] As shown in FIG. 10 [[4]], the joint conveyance carriage assembly 12 moves through the gradient conveyance unit 18 and enters the horizontal conveyance unit 16 that is disposed beyond and connected to the gradient conveyance unit 18. In the horizontal conveyance unit 16, the first conveyance carriage 200 moves over the horizontal upper guide 40, and the chain rollers 30a (see FIG. 17 [[5]]) of the annular chain 30 is sandwiched between the horizontal upper guide 40 and the chain presser plate 242 of the first conveyance carriage 200. Since the chain presser plate 242 has a lower surface having an arcuate front side, the annular chain 30 is smoothly introduced beneath the chain presser plate 242. Thereafter, the first conveyance carriage 200 is conveyed under the force applied by the annular chain 30. Then, the chain presser plate 242 of the second conveyance carriage 202 also reaches the horizontal upper guide 40, and the second conveyance carriage 202 is subjected to the conveyance force from the annular chain 30.

Please replace paragraph [283] with the following amended paragraph:

[283] Then, the roller 270 of the fourth conveyance carriage 206 passes across the end of the cam plate 180, and is released from the cam plate 180. The roller 270, the swing plate 260, the small frame 266 are now released from the pressing force applied from the cam plate 180, and return upwardly under the resiliency of the spring 262 (see FIG. 21 [[11]]). The lateral-tooth sprocket 266c is now released from the annular chain 162. Though the fourth conveyance carriage 206 tends to slide down by gravity, since at least the chain presser plate 242 of the first conveyance carriage 200 presses the annular chain 30, the joint conveyance carriage assembly 12 is supported by the fictional force. Therefore, the joint conveyance carriage assembly 12 is not unnecessarily accelerated.

Please replace paragraph [301] with the following amended paragraph:

[301] The motor 32 of the horizontal conveyance unit 16 rotates at a predetermined speed, and the drive power thereof is transmitted through the coupling 96 and the extension shaft 92 (see FIG. 6) to the drive bevel gear 94. The drive bevel gear 94 rotates clockwise as viewed from above. The first driven bevel gear 72 and the second driven bevel gear 74 are held in mesh with the drive bevel gear 94, and are driven by the rotation transmitted from the drive bevel gear 94. The first driven bevel gear 72 has its upper portion pushed out in the direction indicated by the arrow B in FIG. 7 [[5]], and the second driven bevel gear 74 has its upper portion pushed out in the direction indicated by the arrow A in FIG. 7 [[5]]. As a result, the first driven bevel gear 72 rotates clockwise in FIG. 7, and the second driven bevel gear 74 rotates counterclockwise in FIG. 7.

Please replace paragraph [307] with the following amended paragraph:

[307] Because the first rotational shaft 68 and the second rotational shaft 70 are coaxial with each other, the first drive sprocket 36 and the second drive sprocket 37 are also coaxial with each other. The corresponding two driven sprockets 38 (see FIG. 8 [[7]]) are also supported on the common support shaft 108. Therefore, the annular chain 30 and the annular chain 33 provide equal conveyance distances and are symmetrically disposed. This layout makes it easy to construct the horizontal conveyance unit 16 as one unit, and to connect and separate the horizontal conveyance units 16.

Please replace paragraph [344] with the following amended paragraph:

[344] When the rod 1026 of the air cylinder 1024 is lowered, the bearing roller 1040 rolls along the slanted surface 1030 of the larger-diameter portion 1028 on the upper end of the rod 1026, and is displaced radially outwardly of the larger-diameter portion 1028. At this time, the hook 1038 is tilted by being pressed by the spring 1044. As a result, the projecting upper end of the hook 1038 is disengaged from the horizontal engaging finger 1082 of the engaging member 1074 (see FIG. 29 [[15]]). The joint conveyance carriage assembly 12 is now released from the first lock mechanism 1036.